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Tree planting in Lowman epitomizes ITD service goals

BOISE - As Nancy Armstrong's "green" solution in Lowman proves, the Idaho Transportation Department's service to customers often extends beyond highway construction.

Faced with an unsightly view, and wanting to screen it from sight, Armstrong worked with ITD on a solution not involving metal and mesh.

Late in September 2012, Armstrong, who lives below the Lowman maintenance yard, requested a visual buffer between her home and the four-acre ITD yard (and two trailers the department had moved into the area). Finding her view of the mountains partially obscured, she wanted the trailers removed. As that request could not be fulfilled due to ITD's maintenance needs, Armstrong decided upon trees.

ITD southwest Idaho Maintenance Coordinator Dan Bryant helped negotiate the planting of six new Spruce trees along Armstrong's property line, aided by Shawn Strong and Connie Marshall of the department's Vegetation Crew.

The trees were planted behind the trailers to the ITD fence line, near the South Fork of the Payette River. [Click here for a picture of the planted area.](#)

"Nancy was deeply unhappy with the trailers blocking her view and I worked with her to find a viable solution, short of moving the trailers," Bryant explained. "We wanted to soften the visual impact she was dealing with." Bryant and Armstrong met a couple of times to come up with a viable solution.

The solution was to plant trees on her side of the fence and place plastic "privacy" slats in the chain-link fencing. Armstrong then provided Bryant with a list of suitable evergreen trees.

Bryant then tasked Strong and Marshall to get prices from a nursery for the trees, and to work with Armstrong on where to plant them. Shawn and Connie worked with the Franz Witte Nursery on the trees and came up with a package that included planting the trees where the homeowner wanted them and a one-year guarantee on their survival.

"We wanted them on her side of the fence because she already has a watering system in place there," said Bryant, "and they would provide better sight-blockage of the fence and trailers from that location."

Armstrong is complimentary of the outcome. She sent a letter to ITD Director Brian Ness later in the fall commending Bryant and saying that "his efforts to find a meaningful solution were sincere. Dan responded quickly and effectively implemented the agreed-upon plan," Armstrong wrote.

"Nancy's letter of thanks means a lot, because even when she was most unhappy, she was very civil and communicative," Bryant explained.

"It took a couple of tries, but we were able to work together on a difficult situation and I hope she will continue to be happy with the outcome," said Bryant. "It cost us a little money," he said, "but she's been a good neighbor to us for years, and we wanted to preserve that."

Marshall and Strong planted the trees about a year ago, and went back to Lowman this spring to ensure that the trees had survived the winter. She said they looked healthy, but because pine trees grow slowly, it'd likely be two more years before they are visibly larger.

Highway construction is one of the key forces pushing Idaho toward continued economic vitality by creating jobs, improving safety and reducing traffic congestion.

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